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POLEMICS AND IRENICS

OR

WHAT WILL BE THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE?

BY

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

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GEO. H. ELLIS CO., 272 CONGRESS STREET
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POLEMICS AND IRENICS; OR, WHAT WILL BE THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE?

That the Church is to remain always in its present divided and inefficient state is to disbelieve the promises of Christ and to distrust the providence of God. How, for instance, can the Roman Church conquer Protestantism in the nineteenth century, when it could not hold its own in the sixteenth? And how can any one form of Protestantism conquer the rest, when each has its root in some special tendency or instinct of the human soul which the rest cannot satisfy? The nature of man, the instincts of the human soul, the unappeasable appetites of the mind and heart, forbid that we should either stay where we are or go backward. Therefore, the only alternative for the Church is to go forward to a higher ground, to a larger synthesis, a richer life, a fuller activity, a grander union. And this must be preceded by new creeds and new ideas. Deeper thought must precede larger action. There is, then, a pioneer work still to be done in theology,—unapproached problems to be examined and old problems to be re-examined.

Let us take a survey of this domain, glancing at some of these problems which need to be examined or to be re-examined. We shall find that there is no department of theology which is not in motion; nothing scientifically and permanently ascertained; that there is a current of thought setting it all forward. We are not, therefore, called upon to do this great work of theological reform alone, or by main strength, and by the power of mere intellect. If we were, we might well despair. No great work of any kind is ever done so. There is a Divine Power

behind all human thought and action, setting forward the currents of human opinion; and we have only to suffer our minds to be borne forward without haste or rest by that Divine Providence. Then the thoughts which come to us will come also to others. Without rashness on the one hand or fear on the other, following the leadings of Providence, we shall find all things working together for good in the sphere of thought no less than in that of action.

And now I will consider with you, during the remainder of this address, the tendency of this Theology of the Future and the form which some of its special problems will probably assume.

In one word, I would call past theology Polemic Theology, or War Theology; future theology I would call Irenic Theology, or Peace Theology.

For there is a certain process in human thought, a certain law by which it advances, which made it natural and necessary that the Polemic Theology should precede the Irenic in the historic development of church doctrines. According to this law, first comes the THESIS, then the ANTITHESIS, and, lastly, the SYNTHESIS, or Reconciliation. The Christian intellect—earnest, honest, but limited and narrow—sees first the most obvious form of truth which presents itself. This constitutes the Thesis,—the positive view, the ground position in theology. This Thesis contains truth, but only one side of truth. At first it delights by its clearness, afterwards it dissatisfies by its narrowness. A want is felt, unsupplied by this view, and the opposite and antagonist elements of truth call for their rights. These assert themselves as the Antithesis, and almost necessarily in the way of opposition, contradiction, battle. The Thesis has possession of the ground, and claims the whole as its own: the Antithesis has therefore to fight for a place. Hence the great struggles in the Church, between the

Trinity and Unity, Arianism and Sabellianism, Augustinianism and Pelagianism, Calvinism and Arminianism, Naturalism and Supernaturalism, Universalism and Partialism, the Catholic and the Protestant Church systems. The theology of the Church has thus far been a polemic theology, originating in the heat of controversy. But, if we believe in a Providence which rules the world of mind as fully as that of matter, we must suppose these antitheses to be moving forward toward a reconciliation in a higher synthesis. It were atheism of the worst kind to doubt it. To believe that all is left to accident and caprice in the world of thought, while in the world of sense not a sparrow falls without the Father,—that he numbers the hairs of the head, careless of the thoughts within,—is a godless theory of human opinions, and one to which thoughtful men cannot easily subscribe.

But what will be the nature of this Irenic, or Peace, Theology? What the character of the Syntheses which are to reconcile present antagonisms?

Peace Theology will be founded on the conviction that every system which has been widely received and long retained must have within it a kernel of truth; that men gravitate toward truth, not toward error; that the error in a system comes rather from its omissions than its assertions; that what is seen and said has truth in it; that error is mostly to be found, therefore, on the negative, and not on the positive, side of a system. But this Peace Theology will not be a neutral theology,—not weak, undecided, or shifting; not a yes and no theology, which knows not what it would say; not a medley of opinions taken from all quarters. But it will be a high, overlooking theology, which finds truth, not in the middle, but on both sides; which is fed out of the large resources of a deep Christian experience, a wide observation of men, and

a generous faith in human nature. The peace thus founded will be deep and lasting; not a compromise, but the joyful concord of different yet harmonious convictions.

Antecedent to all questions in theology is the question of the nature of theology itself. Here the conflict is between the dogmatist on the one side and the sceptic on the other. The first sees the immense importance of truth, but confounds the truth which he sees and feels with his own imperfect verbal statements of it, and so becomes necessarily a bigot. The other, revolting from these narrow statements, rejects all positive opinion, and makes his religion a matter of feeling or external action. The synthesis which shall reconcile this conflict will, I think, be found in the distinction between Religion and Theology, between Faith and Belief, between the internal conviction and the formal expression of it. This distinction, which is now becoming clear to most thoughtful minds, will enable men to place Theology where it belongs, as a progressive science, with a fixed substance, but a varying form. This being recognized, men will neither fight for the letter nor doubt of the spirit; will neither dogmatize nor despair; will be fixed in central truth, yet move freely through the phases of advancing and enlarging knowledge.

I. The nature of theology being thus ascertained, the first great question of theology comes, concerning the evidence of the Divine Existence. Here, while the *Theist* asserts the existence of God, the *Atheist* denies the evidence; and, because he can find no proof which completely satisfies his intellect, he thinks himself bound to deny the fact itself. But perhaps this controversy may be reconciled when it is seen that the *knowledge of God* is one thing, and *the proof* of the Divine Existence quite a different thing. And, strange as it may seem, the past has given us no satisfactory results on this fundamental question. Four of the great-

est thinkers the world has known—Anselm, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz—have professed themselves satisfied with the ontological proof of the Divine Existence. But Kant pronounces this to be unsatisfactory, for reasons to which most thinkers now assent. But Kant's own proof, drawn from the moral nature of man, has given as little satisfaction. Dr. Clarke's argument from Necessary Existence has had no better success. The deepest thinkers have found fault with the argument for design drawn from the adaptations of the outward universe. Theology, therefore, has not yet furnished us with any proof of its fundamental proposition which theologians themselves will generally admit to be satisfactory. But this very failure prepares the way for a better success, showing us that God exists to us, not as we think, but as we live; that our faith in God is not a belief based upon arguments, but a knowledge wrought out of action. Theology is to show us that the pure in heart see God; that the righteous man dedicating life to God's service, the martyr dying for the truth, the soul flying to God in prayer, the Indian mother calling to the Great Everywhere to save her drowning child, —that these know God. Theology will thus base itself, not on dead speculation, but on living intuition and experience, on man's nature in its healthy exercise. The knowledge of God, it is to be seen, comes not *to* us, but *out* of us; not from without, but from within. One of our leading theologians has said: "We must start in religion from our own souls. In these is the fountain of all divine truth. The only God whom our thoughts can rest on, and our hearts can cling to, and our consciences can recognize, is the God whose image dwells in our own souls. The grand ideas of Power, Reason, Wisdom, Love, Rectitude, Holiness, Blessedness (that is, of all God's attributes) come from within, from the action of our own spiritual nature."

This statement of Dr. Channing makes the existence of God something to be known by the action of the soul itself; that is, an *Experience*. It is this view which is to become the basis of theology, and to overthrow both speculative and practical atheism.

II. Next to the question of the Divine Being comes that of Divine Revelation. And here, also, theology is moving forward. That she has as yet by no means uttered her last word on this subject appears from the disputes, as yet unreconciled, between the advocates of Natural and Supernatural Revelation. One class contends that all kinds of Divine Revelation are strictly natural, and identical with each other; that all proceed according to law, and without miracles; and that the revelation in Christ was the same kind as the revelation in Socrates. The others distinguish Natural from Revealed Religion to such an extent as to make the first *no* revelation, and to make the second not only supernatural, but unnatural. But the best theology of our time seeks to reconcile the truths of Naturalism with those of Supernaturalism. It distinguishes God's revelations without dividing them,—shows that God speaks to us, not the same word, but different words, in Nature, in Christ, in the Soul. It also shows that these revelations are in harmony and not in conflict with each other; that each is needed to complete the others. It accepts NATURE as a revelation of God, but as the God of the race rather than of the individual; God as a bountiful order rather than as a personal friend. In CHRIST, again, it finds the Personal God, acting according to freedom as well as according to law,—able, therefore, to pardon the sinner, to answer prayer, and to meet the occasions of Time by new incursions of a higher life out of Eternity. These incursions are miracles, which are not arbitrary nor lawless phenomena, but openings into a higher world, glimpses of a higher

order. So, again, God reveals himself in the soul, adding greatly to the knowledge which we have of him through Nature and through Christ,—adding to it, but not setting it aside. And hence results the true doctrine of the TRINITY, as a threefold manifestation of God, a doctrine rooted in the nature of things, and which, when truly understood, will be the foundation of union, as hitherto, in its incomplete form, it has been the source of division.

III. Christianity being thus accepted as one of the three great revelations of God, the next question which arises regards its SOURCES. Where are we to find Christ? Here, again, are several distinct and opposing answers which theology is to reconcile. The Churchman answers, "In the Church"; the Protestant says, "In the Scriptures"; the man of piety replies, "In Religious Experience"; and the Rationalist answers, "In the Reason."

Protestant theology must reconsider its famous statement, that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice. This is a polemic statement, rising as an antithesis to the Roman Catholic statement that the CHURCH *and* the Scriptures are the rule of faith; and, like all other polemic statements, it is a half-truth, not a whole one. For what does it mean? That the Scriptures are the only source of our knowledge of Christ and Christianity? But this is not true. The Scriptures themselves speak of another source; namely, the Holy Spirit. Jesus declares that the Holy Spirit is to lead us into all truth. But this Holy Spirit, which is the source of the authority of the New Testament writers, is not limited to those writers, but is given to all Christians. The truth which is in the New Testament cannot be understood deeply, except by a similar experience in our own hearts; for spiritual truth must be spiritually discerned. Christian experience, therefore, in individuals, and in the combination of indi-

viduals which composes the Church, is a source of Christian knowledge no less than the Scriptures.

But the Protestant statement may imply that the Scripture is the only rule of faith in the sense of its being the final judge and arbiter of faith, meaning that, where there is a conflict, the final appeal is to the Scripture. But the question still remains, Who is to decide what the Scripture teaches? Admitting that, when the sense of Scripture in regard to any disputed point is ascertained, it is authoritative, the question still comes, Who is to ascertain it? The Scripture is not a judge, but a law. For a judge we need, not a book, but a man,—a living tribunal which can meet the present question. This living tribunal must be either the Church or the individual; and the last decision must be given either by the tribunals of the Church in its corporate capacity or by the private judgment of the individual. Now, though Protestants assert in theory the right of private judgment, in practice they renounce it. If a member of any Protestant church exercises the right of private judgment, and declares that the Scriptures do not teach the Trinity or the Deity of Christ, he is in danger of excommunication. Such are the inconsistencies of Protestantism, showing that its famous statement concerning the Scriptures needs to be revised. The result of this revision will probably be that we shall receive the Scripture, Christian Experience, and the Faith of the Church as co-ordinate SOURCES of Christian truth, and private reason, or judgment, as the ultimate judge of Christian truth. That is, in seeking for truth, we are to go to the Scripture, to our own Christian experience, and to the faith of the Church, as the three sources of knowledge. In deciding what these say, each man must finally use his own judgment, or reason. Thus Protestants will concede to Catholics that the Church is an authority as well as the

Scripture, as a source of truth. Protestants will not concede too much in conceding this, for opinions which have been widely held and long retained must contain within them some important truth; that is, they are sources of truth. They are *placers* where gold is to be found, though perhaps mixed with earth and stone. Nor will the Catholic concede too much in granting private judgment; for it is a law of human nature that, if men believe at all, they must believe with their own minds. Where private judgment ends, there individual belief ends also. The authority of the Church may cause men to *assent*, but cannot cause them to *believe*. It can prevent them from expressing their own opinions, it may induce them to acquiesce in its own, but this is all. This is evidently only conformity, not conviction.

IV. The sources and standard of truth being determined, the next question concerns the Substance of Truth, or the Doctrines of Christianity. Here the great controversy is between that general scheme of Orthodoxy which we may call, for convenience, Calvinism,—since its culminating point and most logical expression is in Calvin's Institutes,—and those schemes of heresy which we may call, for convenience, Unitarianism.

Now to me, as a Unitarian, it has long been manifest that Calvinism contained some most important truths, and that these must be seen, known, and extricated by theology, so that we may accept them, before we shall ever be able to conquer Calvinism. Calvinism, as a whole, I reject for its erroneous views of God and of man; but its essential truths I feel to be profoundly needed for a full Christian development and a thorough Christian experience. What are they?

The essential truths of Calvinism I hold to be these:—

1. Calvinism asserts the necessity of a radical change in

man before he can be capable of happiness, of holiness, or of usefulness. It asserts that mere development is not enough, that conversion is necessary,—that depravity is to be rooted out, as well as good taken in,—that education is not enough, that inner transformation is necessary,—a change of motive, a change of aim, a change of heart,—and that we cannot accomplish this alone, or apart from God; that we must depend on God, in order to draw in this new life, and that this life flows from God into the soul,—is not pumped up by our own manual labor out of any well within the heart, but descends, shower-like, from the heavens.

In this statement, I conceive, is contained all that is essential in the Orthodox doctrines of Depravity, Regeneration, and Divine Influence. The Doctrine of Total Depravity means only this: that until we turn round, and walk in the right way, we are going wrong; that until we act from a really generous and conscientious motive, instead of a selfish one, all our conduct is tainted with evil,—and that is true. Hereditary Depravity means essentially this: that we are born into a stream of impure and corrupt life; that the inward organization is tainted by the results of past ancestral sins; that outward influences, the atmosphere of thought and feeling which surrounds us, the social life and thought which feeds our mind and heart, are tainted by evil examples and habits,—and that is true. Regeneration means essentially that, besides an outward change of conduct, an inward change of motive is necessary; that we must not only begin to do what is right from conscience, but love what is right and enjoy doing it. And Divine Influence means that this new love must be poured into the heart by God, in answer to the sincere prayer of one who hungers and thirsts after goodness. And all this seems to me to be profoundly true.

2. Secondly, Calvinism, or Orthodoxy, asserts the possibility of this radical change by means of what Christ has done and suffered. It asserts that every obstacle, outward and inward, in the way of our becoming filled with love, peace, light, has been abolished by the work of Christ; that every wall separating us from God, separating us from men, has been thrown down in Jesus Christ; that his life and death have redeemed us, first from the guilt, and secondly from the power of sin.

In this statement I find all that is essential in the Orthodox doctrine of Atonement. Disputing with Unitarians, the Orthodox assert more to be necessary. Discussing among themselves and attempting to reconcile their own differences, they are unable to take a single step beyond this.

And this I hold to be true. Christ has made satisfaction; that is, he has done enough. He has removed the obstacles, whatever they are. The practical faith in the Atonement is to believe that the obstacles have been removed by Christ; that the way to God is open; that we can have pardon, peace, bliss, holiness, no matter how sinful and impure we have been. When we can believe this, we believe in the Atonement.

3. And, thirdly, Orthodoxy asserts the union of the human and the divine in Christ; asserts that in him God was man, and man God; asserts that the fulness of the Divine nature was in him, and that thus he is the king of the world, the head of the human family, the central figure of all human history.

In this statement I find all that is essential in the doctrine of the Deity of Christ and of the Trinity, so far forth as based on it. Many of the Orthodox themselves would admit this to be an exhaustive statement of their doctrine.

And this statement, also, I find to be true. Christ I

believe to have been the providential man, selected before all worlds, in the Divine decree, to be thus united intimately with God, and become a partaker of the Divine nature. Thus he is a manifestation of our Father; of the personal, loving Father, of the pardoning, life-giving Father, who draws us all up to himself in a tender embrace of love. This Father we see manifest in the Son; and the awful infinity and eternity, the terrible order of the universe, is changed into a friend in the face of Jesus. God takes personality in Christ. I am not a Pantheist. I believe in the personality of God because I believe in Christ. He who has seen him has seen the Father.

Here are the three essential doctrines of Orthodoxy: first, the Depravity of Man, making a true conversion necessary; second, the Atonement, or the work of Christ, making this conversion possible; third, the Deity in Christ, or God manifest in the flesh.

But if these are the essentials of Orthodoxy, and if these are all true, why was Unitarianism necessary, and in what sense can Unitarianism be a growth, a reform, and a system of truth also?

The essential thing in *Unitarianism* is that it is the antithesis to Orthodoxy,—that it states another side of truth, and a side which had been omitted by Orthodoxy.

For the philosophy of progress in human opinion is as we have seen. The error of all great systems of opinion is not in what they assert, but in what they deny or omit to assert. The mind of man is so made that it sees and loves truth. Truth attracts it, and truth only. If it accepts error, it is for the sake of some truth mingled with it. But the mind of man is also narrow: it knows in part and teaches only in part. It sees one side of truth; and thus a great system, like Calvinism, is accepted and earnestly believed because of the truth which it contains, which

is found to be food and strength to the soul. But after a while its deficiencies come to be felt. It is found to be narrow, to be insufficient to supply all the wants of the soul. A hunger for something else arises; the long-stifled appetite can no longer be resisted; the want, long left unfilled, can no longer be neglected; and then there comes up another system, adapted to feed and satisfy this side of man's nature.

It was in this way that Unitarianism came. The thesis of Orthodoxy had omitted certain truths, and this omission, this negation, was the cause of the new movement forward. The attraction of a new truth, vaguely seen, but felt to be the thing needed, draws the minds of men onward, till it takes form in some leading minds, and then becomes the banner of a new reform.

Now Calvinism, in its strong statement of human depravity, omitted to state human capacity. In stating the sinfulness of man's nature, it omitted the goodness of man's nature. In demanding conversion, it neglected progress. In calling for a new life, it omitted *growth*, or development of that life. In stating that Christ was the only Atonement, it omitted the preparation for Christ, in reason, nature, moral effort, and the beautiful tendencies of the original soul. In asserting the divinity of Jesus, it did not assert the divinity of humanity and the soul. In saying that God was in Christ, it forgot to say that God was also manifest in nature and the human soul. But God is in nature and the soul, and these are also revelations of him. When these revelations were ignored and passed over, it became a necessity that there should be a movement to assert them.

For it follows of necessity that Calvinism, not recognizing God in nature or in the soul, takes religion out of the sphere of morality and into that of piety. Religion is divorced from morality, faith from works, revelation from

reason. Hence its power to reform the world is crippled; hence it is thought man's business to save his own soul, and not to do good to his fellow-man. Hence social sins and wrongs and evils are suffered to remain unrebuked. Hence war and slavery and intemperance have become part of the established institutions of Christian nations. All these things have been considered to have nothing to do with the gospel, nor the gospel with them. And so it happens to-day that, if a man in the pulpit attacks these wrongs, and seeks to show their unchristian character, he is told that his business is to "preach the gospel," and not to meddle with such matters.*

Hence Unitarianism, which is essentially the assertion of that which is divine in nature and man, and that the office of Christ is to save the soul in this world no less than in the other. Not that Unitarianism saw, or sees, all the work it is destined to do. No reform ever does see its own destiny, as no prophet can foretell his own fate.

But why should Unitarianism spring up just *here*, and not in other places? It came *here* as a part of the Church, as a movement within the Church, because here the principles of Puritan freedom and Congregational independence made it possible. Elsewhere it has come up, but as a silent protest outside of the Church, and has been classed with worldly and irreligious tendencies. But here it was able to take form as a distinct religious protest, and so became a new denominational movement.

But Unitarianism, having to contend against a great and powerful organization, was obliged, not merely to attack doctrines, but to announce principles. By the grandeur of the principles which it declared, it was able to awaken an interest and enthusiasm. The breadth of the principle concealed the narrowness of the party.

* There has been a change in this respect, but the passage is left as an historic note.

And what are its essential principles?

1. First, that the test of true Christianity is LIFE, and not CREEDS. By this principle we unite all hearts who love the spirit better than the form, the essence better than the accident. The mere logical theologian will contend for his creed, but the spiritual Christian feels that there is something deeper and better.

2. Secondly, that Christianity is Rational.

3. Thirdly, that it is Progressive.

On the basis of Progress we contend against every attempt to limit and restrain inquiry. On the basis of Reason we contend against everything unintelligible, contradictory, and opposed to the instincts of the soul. So we have these three principles:—

Life, and not Creeds, the essence of Christianity.

Christianity a Reasonable Religion.

Christianity a Progressive Religion.

Standing on this basis of principle, we protested against the Scholastic theology, embalmed in the creeds of the churches. We criticised the Trinity, the Vicarious Atonement, the doctrines of Election, Depravity, and Everlasting Punishment, and those criticisms remain in a great measure unanswered and unanswerable. And this protest has caused the creeds to be greatly modified.

But, while this is doing, another movement arises among us. It seems that Unitarianism, too, has its defects. It has omitted certain truths, and this omission has made a third doctrinal movement inevitable. The TRANSCENDENTAL-REFORMATORY * movement has come up here, and has taken form in a religious body, the child of Unitarianism, as Unitarianism was the child of Orthodoxy.

What did Unitarianism omit in its statements? It was everywhere too negative, too critical, too much a system

* This passage also is left as an historic note.

for the understanding, too little a system for the deeper heart. In its piety and its morality it has been equally narrow. It has too much denied the mysterious and incomprehensible; it has too often omitted the communion of the soul with God; and therefore it has been wanting in that deeper enthusiasm growing out of mysterious religious experiences. It has made religion too much a matter of expediency, prudence, calculation.

The principles of Unitarianism are positive and real, but the doctrines of Unitarianism are all too negative. Its own doctrines are not fully and forcibly brought out. It is too much a mitigated Orthodoxy. But every denomination, in order to live and advance, must have its own positive view of truth. This is the only justification of its existence as an independent body.

Has Unitarianism such a scheme of positive doctrine? It has; developed imperfectly, and with not sufficient sharpness, in all its pulpits and writings. It needs only a sharp, clear, theological development to make it a system supplementary to Orthodoxy; and, in doing this, it would also take back into itself the Transcendental movement.

I can merely hint at this now: a full statement demands a volume. But these are parts of the positive doctrine which is to be developed:—

If man's actual condition involves hereditary and total depravity, his capacity is divine. There is in man's nature, in every man's nature, the seed of infinite good. Hence, while he is to be deeply humble in view of actual evil, he is to be greatly hopeful in view of his capacity.

This view has been developed by Dr. Channing, and it is the logical basis of human brotherhood and of all reform movements. It contains in itself the abolition of war, slavery, pauperism, the reform of criminals, and all the

means for the suppression of social vices. The secret of the whole is to regard every man as a true brother on account of the divine capacity now within him, and to treat him as such.

This is the first point of *positive Unitarian theology.*

The next is Christ the Man, the Divine Man; not only the fulness of the Godhead, but the fulness of manhood; the type of the race, the prophecy of its future in all things, the first-born of many brethren.

Was he one with God? So shall we all be. Did he work miracles? So shall we all. Did he overcome evil with good? Did he reconcile the world to his Father? So shall we; that shall be our work also.

Did he read the future? Did he understand the present? Is he the Judge of the world? Did he rise on the third day? Did he ascend to heaven, and sit on God's right hand, and yet continue near to the world, advancing the cause of truth and love? In all these things he is our precursor, elder brother, head. We are to follow him in the regeneration, to be made like him, to be one with God and him, to be filled with the fulness of God, to be partakers of the Divine nature.

Again, the work of Christ is to introduce heaven here,—heaven here first, immortality here first,—and that heaven is to consist in love. Not to save the soul into a future heaven, but to save it out of selfishness and sin into life and love. This is the work of Christ.

Now, in making these statements of Unitarianism, I have stated all that is essential also, in my opinion, in the Transcendental movement. Its negations are not its essential part. Its denial of miracles, of the supernatural element in the life of Jesus, of the depravity of man,—these are not the things for which it is received and loved. No, but for its positive side, its claim of a present inspira-

tion, its noble protest against all wrong done to man by man, its true Christian democracy,—these constitute its power. And there is nothing on its positive side which cannot and ought not to be accepted by the whole Unitarian body.

Thus our work, Christian friends, ministers of Jesus, brother students, opens before us. It is a great and noble work, a work to be done in thought and action. Our business is the things which make for peace, and things by which we may build up each other. Let us leave to others all destructive controversy. Let us, while we criticise with the utmost freedom, always make criticism subservient to a practical gospel, negation subordinate to position, denial to assertion. Let us be builders, reconcilers, mediators, in the Christian brotherhood. God is with us, and a great field, white for harvest, before us. If we are faithful to these great opportunities, we shall doubtless come rejoicing, and our sheaves with us. For we have great allies, in human instincts, human reason, the hunger of the immortal soul, the spirit of the age, and the great course and current of Divine Providence.

Pardon me for detaining you so long. Pardon me the imperfections of this statement. Accept it as a brother's contribution to the studies dear to us all; and may these hints be soon forgotten in the advancing light and increasing activity of our body in all good thoughts, words, and works.

[Note.—In the discussion which followed the delivery of the foregoing address, certain charges were urged against its contents and its form. It was accused of eclecticism, of being on "all sides of all questions," of vagueness and "mystical phraseology," of error in undervaluing the arguments for the being of God, and in declaring the main argument for the personality of God to be derived from the revelation of God in Christ. Also, it was charged with injustice toward Unitarianism in calling it a negative system.

The charge of being "on all sides of all questions," I should be glad to admit, if this were so; for, believing that there is some truth on all sides, I should rejoice in being able to discover it and receive it. But this requires the efforts, not of one, but of many minds. I therefore accept this charge as a proof that my desire of seeing the truths in all systems has been recognized.

The charge of eclecticism, as it was urged and explained, I deny. It was said that, instead of going to the gospel to find the truth, I recommended going to different sects, and taking from each, whatever opinion seemed agreeable. I recognize the living Church, in all its branches, as the best interpreter of the gospel. Having taken from the New Testament that which can be seen by my own narrow judgment and which suits my own peculiar mind, I go to the Christian Church, to find in each part the truths which I have not been able to discover for myself in the gospel. Each denomination, each party in the Church, may teach me something. I do not go to them to pick and cull, but to receive whatever truth God has given them to say to me. This is a different thing from eclecticism.

The charge of vagueness and mysticism I leave to be confuted or established by the address itself.

I recognize the great difficulty connected with the discussion of the evidences of the Divine Being and Existence. I mean here simply to assert that the fact of the Divine Being does not belong to probabilities but to certainties. It is not something to be proved, but something to be known. The foundation of this knowledge is in ourselves, but it is by experience that it grows into certainty.

I believe that, without the revelation of Jesus, the belief in God tends either to Polytheism or to Pantheism. The Jews were Monotheists by means of what was to them a standing revelation of a Personal Will, and they only retained a conviction of a Divine Personality by faith in a succession of arbitrary acts. God was to them *out* of nature. But we are able to recognize fully the Divine Immanence in nature, and also the personality of God by means of the full personality of Christ, who is in this respect the image of God.

I believe that the objectionable negations of Unitarianism have consisted in their seeming to be negations for the sake of negations instead of negations for the sake of a new assertion. I think that, when we destroy the old only in order to make a place for the new, the evil of denial ceases.]